"BREAKERS."

[For the Times.]

I hold a shell unto mine ear,
I hear the murmurs of the sea,
And to mine inward vision clear,
Rise the fair days that are to be.

The waters tumbling 'neath the sun,
The snow-white caps upon the wave,
The full-rigged ship, the tiny one,
The porpoise leap, the swimmers brave.

The morning light upon the sea,
The light-house gleam at twilight's fall,
They are so beautiful to me,
The walks upon the beach, and all.

Where e'er we be are breakers high,
Our pulses bring the ebb and flow,
Sometimes a smile, sometimes a sigh;
The minutes come, the hours go.

We hope to go unto that shore
Where jewels lie along the strand,
Where earthly tempests are no more,
Where peaceful beauty rules the land.

The heavenly breakers meet the sky
With solemn music as they roll;
No more earth's life and heart-storms high,
We'll watch them with a quiet soul.

Richmond, Va., April 14, 1891.

COMMODORE ROSCOE'S "PAR CLO'ES."

[Gilberta S. Whittle in Philadelphia Times.]

"Mammy, I wished you'd buy me a par clo'es."

This request, in a whining monotone, came from a small ebon specimen of the masculine gender, who, arrayed in a single garment, bearing a suspicious resemblance to a reconstructed meal bag, sat on a stool in the corner of the broad stone fire-place, slowly rubbing the top of one rusty black foot with the horny sole of the other. It was a warm afternoon in August. The sun was three hours past the jagged "twelve o'clock mark," cut deep across the door sill. Aunt Dilsy, with turbaned head and shoeless feet protruding several inches through a pair of worn yarn stockings, stood ironing at a board stretched between the open door and the sashless window, whose clumsy shutter was fastened back against the wall to admit more light.

The room, the only one of which the cabin boasted, was scrupulously clean. The pine floor, worn about the doorstep and the stone hearth, was as white as "suds" and vigorous rubbing could make it. On the walls, for the double purpose of ornamentation and to keep out the keen winter winds, which in that bitter mountain climate forced an entrance through every crack and crevice, pictures, cut from story papers, fashion books and floral catalogues, had been pasted. Lambrequins of scalloped newspapers were tacked about the mantel-piece and the wooden shelf. Upon the latter, arranged with mathematical precision, was a pen which would not write, an inkstand and a few calico-covered books, and above it depended a vilifying mirror, looking like a small lake under the influence of a stiff breeze. In one corner stood an unpainted bedstead with snowy "cover-led" and ruffled pillow cases of coarse muslin. This, with a table and a few rough chairs and stools, completed the furniture of the room, for the crockery and cooking utensils were hidden away in a closet under the steps which led to the loft above.

"Las' summer," continued Commodore—Aunt Dilsy, who was fond of a "quar name an' didn't had nothin' else to give him," had called the boy so in honor of "Mar's Commodo' Roscoe," who had once spent a summer at the mineral springs near—"when dat lady whar was bo'din' at Mr. Trasher's wanted me to fetch 'er letters f'om de office ev'y mail day you wouldn't lemme, 'cause you was feared I'd skeer de folks goin' 'long de big road. I can't never make no money twell I gits some clo'es."

Aunt Dilsy set her iron down on its ring with a sharp thud, and began pulling out the ruffles on a delicate garment she was preparing to smooth.

"What you talkin' so simple 'bout boy?" she said at last, pausing a moment in her occupation and fixing a withering look upon Commodore. "You know dat lady won't give you enuf money to clo'es you."

"I know she won't," replied Commodore sulkily, "but ef I'd had a pa'r clo'es I could 'er been geth'rin' berries all de summer an' carryin' 'em to de springs to sell."

Aunt Dilsy met this last argument with chilling silence.

"Mammy," broke in Commodore at last, describing circles with one terrapin great toe in a pile of ashes he had drawn out upon the hearth, "ef I gits de money to buy me some clo'es kin I hab' em?"

Aunt Dilsy gave a significant chuckle. "Yes, chile, ef you gits de money to buy 'em wid you kin hab 'em." Then, with a sudden change of tone, quite startling to one less acquainted with her varying moods than Commodore was, "An now you stop makin' all dat fuss an' git up f'om dar an' go an' pick me up some bresh, you hear me?"

The interrogatory portion of this sentence was pitched at least an octave higher than its opening clause, a key Aunt Dilsy was very apt to drift into when issuing her orders to the little darkey.

Twelve years of intimate association with her had taught Commodore to gauge the maternal barometer with great accuracy. At the least fall in the mercury his custom was to drop the suit he was urging, postponing it until the fair weather indications were unequivocal. He was on his feet the moment this command was given, and pretty soon might have been seen running down the hard, smooth path which led to the wood, his white garment fluttering like a pennon in the breeze.

Aunt Dilsy was influenced by motives of deep diplomacy in keeping Commodore's wings thus clipped. As a bringer of water and "bresh" he was invaluable to her in her occupation as laundress for the guests at the Chalybeate. "But des lem me giv' him a pa'r clo'es," she reflected, "an' he'd be des same as a bird out de cage. I couldn't never keep 'im off de big road."

In cold weather Commodore's wardrobe had the addition of a pair or so of very remarkable pants, put together with the clumsiest possible stitches, and cut by Aunt Dilsy's eye. But they were never sufficiently presentable to enable him to appear at school, a circumstance which the little darkey deeply deplored.

Aunt Dilsy, however, considered education for the colored people, "'doubt dey was gwine to be preachers or zorters'" entirely superfluous. "Dese here book works," she was wont to say, "don't do nothin' 'cep' make niggers no 'count and triflin'." As might have been expected, these unfashionable sentiments rendered her unpopular with her neighbors, while poor little Commodore was the target for many cruel jests from "de school chillen." "I 'clar, boy," they would say with exasperating "Haw! haws!" when coming upon him in the woods, "you looks zackly like dese here sabbage folks whar dey tells 'bout in de gography."

Commodore felt his superiority to them in some things, however. He could beat them climbing, he was certain, and as he flitted about beneath the forest trees, picking up the fallen branches, his brain was busily engaged in evolving a secret, half-formed plan.

A greased pole, so he had heard, with a ten-dollar note tied to the end of it, was to be erected on Saturday in front of the principal hotel at the Chalybeate. On the afternoon of that day the colored boys in the neighborhood were invited to assemble upon the lawn and exhibit their skill in climbing, for the amusement of the guests, the successful contestant receiving, as his reward, the sum above mentioned.

The last stick was laid upon the pile, and as Commodore gathered all together and locked his fingers firmly across the irregular bundle, the vague schemes and aspirations which had floated through his brain crystalized into a fixed and distinct purpose. "Ef you gets de money to buy 'em wid, you kin hab 'em." Aunt Dilsy's words kept repeating themselves in his mind. Despite her many infirmities she was "mighty good to her word," and Commodore had no doubt but that she would keep her promise to him. He was very happy in this assurance, and in the bright hopes conjured up by his own imagination; and, as he hurried in the direction of home, he broke into song, making the woods vocal with one of Aunt Dilsy's favorite hymns:

Yander comes ole Noah,
Halleluya! Halleluya!
Oh, yander comes ole Noah,
Halleluya! Halleluya!
And how you know it is ole Noah?
Halleluya! Halleluya!
'Cause I see de yark o' promise.
Halleluya! Halleluya!

Yander comes de Angel Gabrel,
Halleluya! Halleluya!
Oh, yander comes the Angel Gabrel
Halleluya! Halleluya!
And how you know hits the Angel Gabrel?
Halleluya! Halleluya!
'Cause I see his brazen trumpet.
Halleluya! Halleluya!

Saturday evening proved bright and sunshiny. All nature seemed in sympathy with the festive occasion. The sun looked down with the benignest possible smile upon his broad countenance, and the gentlest zephyr stirred the leaves of the forest trees. As the guests issued from hotels and cottages, and hurried in the direction indicated by the posters stuck about the grounds, a small half-nude figure might have been seen to creep from the woods near Aunt Dilsy's cabin, and flit across the fields and down unfrequented paths toward the same spot.

The route Commodore had chosen brought him to the rear of the back buildings.

Here, fearing that he might be observed by some of the waiters and driven from the grounds, he paused a moment and surveyed the scene from behind a friendly tree. But there was no danger of detection. Outhouses and kitchens were silent and deserted. The servants, great and small, pressed close to the throng about the pole, giving the inner circle of white the appearance of being surrounded by a black border. Having convinced himself that the coast was clear, Commodore darted from his hiding-place and sped towards the main hotel, where, with body pressed close against the side of the building, he peered out at the waiting crowd. The contestants stood in a group apart, huddled together like a flock of black sheep.

"Dess look at dem fool niggers," he chuckled, as he noted their stiff shoes and heavy coats. "Dey mus' be want to let de white folks know dey's got some shoes."

"Time's up," called out a burly, red-faced man, glancing at the watch he held open in his hand, and speaking to a crestfallen little darkey, who, after various ineffectual attempts to scale the slippery ascent, had slidden helplessly to the ground.

The ten dollars seemed destined to be restored to the pockets of those who had contributed it. One by one the contestants strove to gain the lofty height, their clumsy efforts eliciting peals of laughter from the spectators. One by one, disappointed and humiliated, they abandoned the contest, and joined the rapidly swelling ranks of the unsuccessful.

The last competitor had retired from the field, and still the tempting prize floated tauntingly aloft. There was a slight movement, as of separation, in the crowd, when a queer figure, looking like some strange white-winged bird, emerged from an unsuspected hiding place and sped with the rapidity of lightning in the direction of the pole. The appearance of this phenomenon was like an electric shock to the spectators, who stood rooted to the spot in an attitude of motionless expectancy. Commodore paused a moment when he had reached the pole; then, clasping its eel-like surface with his hard palms and clamping it on either side with his rough knees and still rougher soles, began to climb.

Heavens! but it was hard work. The well-defined muscles stood out like knotted cords upon the boy's bare limbs, and the perspiration, bursting from every pore, glittered in diamond drops upon his jetty skin. Still he struggled on. He was gaining ground perceptibly, although he had many a backward slip, which made the hearts of the spectators stand still for a moment, then thump with increased velocity as though making up for lost time.

At last he has reached the goal. There is no danger of his slipping now, for one hand is over the top of the pole. As he unties the fluttering ribbons which hold the note in place a deafening shout bursts from the excited throng. He grasps his hard-earned prize in one hand, then, loosening his hold with the other, slips down from his dizzy height with the speed of electricity, and, springing lightly to the ground, darts through the crowd and rushes like mad through fields, over fences, across ditches, never pausing an instant until having reached Aunt Dilsy's cabin, he sinks panting upon the floor.

A few Sundays after this, when Commodore, arrayed in his "sto' clo'es" and abnormally high collar, entered "de Dry Branch meetin' house," every eye in the congregation was turned upon him. He walked with dignified tread down the aisle, his stiff shoes creaking at every step, and took his seat "right in 'mongst de school chillen." There he remained, to the outward eye, a model of propriety and decorous behavior.

But Commodore was far from being the attentive listener he appeared. Despite "old preacher Volumtime's" warning, uttered in the tones of Stentor, to the careless and unconverted, his thoughts wandered to weekday plans and enterprises. So engrossed was he in these speculations that he gave a great start when a dive for hats among the male portion of the congregation showed him that the services were concluded.

As to Aunt Dilsy, the effect of Commodore's triumph upon her was very curious. It aroused a feeling of maternal pride and ambition in her breast, which might have slumbered eternally but for some such awakening. Her voice had assumed its most boastful key when Commodore came suddenly upon her in the churchyard conversing with "Brother Volumtime."

"Yes," she was saying, "an' you'll see dat he's gwine to beat all de school chillen learnin' out de books dis winter. Commodo's got a mighty good understandin'." Then dashing her praise with a little of the wholesome bitter of disapproval, as she caught sight of the boy hanging about, "Ef he'll only have manners an' behave to correspond he'll do mighty well, Brother Volumtime. He'll do mighty well."

The Tide Setting to Virginia.

For many years as our Valley readers know, the Baltimore and Ohio railway was in the habit of running at fixed intervals what were called "excursion" trains to the West at reduced rates. These trains at every trip took passengers from the Valley as far South as Botetourt, and from the counties West of Staunton, including Highland, Bath, Alleghany, and some of the border counties of West Virginia. They were run in answer to a popular demand then existing, and while the agents of the road stimulated that demand by active personal canvassing, yet the fact remained that the emigration was the outcome of the people's desire to better themselves, and not the result of passenger agents' canvassing. There have gone from Staunton station as many as sixty people from Highland, Bath and Alleghany on one train. This emigration which was so brisk during the years immediately following the civil war, has of late years dwindled to nothing. In the last five years there have been a current and counter current. Instead of excursions West, the Baltimore and Ohio and Chesapeake and Ohio have been advertising excursions East, with favorable freight rates for household furniture and belongings, to those who anticipate making their homes in Virginia. The regular excursion trains from the Valley to the West on the Baltimore and Ohio have long since been discontinued, and now we learn from the Hagerstown Mail that the excursion train from Western Maryland to the West, a Baltimore and Ohio institution of long standing, is about to be withdrawn. In the Valley, the Baltimore and Ohio quickly saw the improving financial condition of the people, and instead of excursion trains West for a people seeking a home to make bread in, substituted pleasure excursions to Atlantic City and Washington for a prosperous people to spend their money on. The Chesapeake and Ohio followed suit. This is a gratifying change of condition in Virginia, and our attention was particularly called to it by the following significant paragraph in the Baltimore Sun of last Saturday:

"Milton V. Richards, land and immigration agent of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, was visited yesterday by a German farmer from North Dakota, who has sold out there and is going to settle either in Western Maryland, Virginia or West Virginia. Five years ago the same farmer was known to Mr. Richards as one of the party who moved from Ohio to Dakota. Some of the party have gone further West and others have come here."—Staunton Vindicator.

A STEER RIDE.

Fitz Lee's Mischievous Nephew and His Blooded Animal.

One of the novel sights seen on Commerce street, Saturday, was a youth mounted on a steer, with saddle, bridle and martingale, which he sat as gracefully as if he was mounted on as blooded an animal as was ever ridden by man. The rider was young Daniel Murray Lee, son of Colonel D. M. Lee, of Stafford, nephew of ex-Governor Fitz Lee, and a descendant of "Light Horse Harry," of the revolution. The "untamed steed," ridden by young Lee, answered to the name of "Davy," and could pace, trot, gallop and sometimes "canter," and, as his rider informed us, makes his mile in something over 2.40. Young Dan, who lives about three miles from town, is about twelve years of age, a good horseman, and when he takes a notion to leave home, gets his saddle and bridle and tackles the first animal he encounters, whether, horse, mule or steer, and he generally gets here too, in good shape.—Fredericksburg Free Lance.

Scene at the Depot.

Citizen—"Hello, are you going to leave us?"

Visiting Stranger—"Yes."

Citizen—"What for? Didn't things come up to representation?"

Visiting Stranger—"I have found everything exactly as represented. I have found your climate equal to, if it does not surpass any in the world. Your soil in its fertility and capacity for varied production is unsurpassed, if not unequalled on this continent. Your social conditions are charming, and your facilities for churches, schools, etc., splendid."

"What's the matter, then?" said the surprised and awe-struck citizen.

"Your roads—the abominable condition of your roads," was the reply. "I have looked at two or three farms that suited me to a T, but when I came to inquire into the facilities for access to market, I came to the conclusion that the better my farm, the more I raised, the worse I would be off. For this sole reason I reluctantly gave up the idea of buying a farm in Albemarle."

This is the substance of a conversation the writer heard not long since, and we have no doubt this expression of opinion can be heard every day from intending buyers in Virginia.

If our farmers are ever to emerge from the slough of despond in which they are floundering, they must do something to improve their roads to market.—Charlottesville Chronicle.

A Man Wanted.

One of the fair sex has made application to this paper to advertise for a man. He must not be over 6 feet 10 inches long, and of medium breadth. He must be ripe with age, but not to exceed three-score and ten. He is not expected to read Greek, Latin and French fluently, but must know something of English. He may be either a professor, doctor, lawyer, preacher or a farmer's son. His eyes may be blue, black, brown, brindle, green or grizzly, but they must not be crossed. His hair may be a light, long or a dark short, or a red curly, but must have some, can't stand a "bald," you know. He must not be a squirrel hunter, well digger or politician. He must not be humpback, Roman nose or slap footed. He must not be adicted to strong drink, overalls or dirty feet. If any one thinks he answers this description, he will apply to editor and receive a letter of introduction to the maiden, and one year subscription to the Banner and Alliance. Hoonoo.—Keysville Banner.

April.

They promised me a flower-bed
That should be truly mine,
Out in the garden by the wall
Beneath the ivy vine.

The boxwood bush would have to stay,
The daily rose bush too;
But for the rest they'd let me plant
Just as I chose to do.

Though not a daffodil was up,
The garden smelled of spring,
And in the trees beyond the wall
I heard the blackbirds sing.

I worked there all the afternoon,
The sun shone warm and still;
I set it thick with flower seeds
And roots of daffodil.

And all the while I dug I planned,
That when my flowers grew,
I'd train them in a lovely bower
And cut a window through;

The visitors who drove from town
Would come out there to see;
Perhaps I'd give them each a bunch,
And then how pleased they'd be!

I made my plans—and then for weeks
Forgot my roots and seeds,
So when I came that way again
They all were choked with weeds.
—Katherine Pyle, in April St. Nicholas.